

§ 624.7

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will emphasize measures that are the most economical and are to be accomplished by using the least damaging practical construction techniques and equipment that retain as much of the existing characteristics of the landscape and habitat as possible. Construction of emergency practices may include, but are not limited to, timing of the construction to avoid impacting fish spawning, clearing of right-of-ways, reshaping spoil, debris removal, use of bioengineering techniques, and revegetation of disturbed areas. Mitigation actions needed to offset potential adverse impacts of the EWP Program practices should be planned for installation before, or concurrent with, the installation of the EWP Program practices. In rare occurrences where mitigation cannot be installed concurrently, plans will require mitigation be accomplished as soon as practical.

(f) NRCS may determine that a measure is not eligible for assistance for any reason, including economic and environmental factors or technical feasibility.

[70 FR 16926, Apr. 4, 2005, as amended at 76 FR 19684, Apr. 8, 2011]

§ 624.7 Cost-sharing.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, the Federal contribution toward the implementation of emergency measures may not exceed 75 percent of the construction cost of such emergency measures, including work done to offset or mitigate adverse impacts as a result of the emergency measures.

(b) If NRCS determines that an area qualifies as a limited resource area, the Federal contribution toward the implementation of emergency measures may not exceed 90 percent of the construction cost of such emergency measures.

§ 624.8 Assistance.

(a) Sponsors must submit a formal request to the State Conservationist for assistance within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence, or 60 days from the date when access to the sites becomes available. Requests must include a statement that the sponsors understand their responsibilities and are willing to pay its cost-shared percentage as well as information per-

taining to the natural disaster, including the nature, location, and scope of the problems and the assistance needed.

(b) On receipt of a formal request for EWP assistance, the State Conservationist or designee shall immediately investigate the emergency situation to determine whether EWP is applicable and to prepare an initial cost estimation for submission to the NRCS Chief or designee. The cost estimation will be submitted no later than 60 days from receipt of the formal request from the sponsor. The State Conservationist will take into account the funding priorities identified in paragraph (c) (3) of this section. The State Conservationist will forward the damage survey report, which provides the information pertaining to proposed EWP practice(s) and indicates the amount of funds necessary to undertake the Federal portion, to the NRCS Chief or designee. This information will be submitted no later than 60 days from receipt of the formal request from the sponsor, or no later than 60 days from the date funding is made available to the State Conservationist, whichever is later. NRCS may not commit funds until notified by the Chief, or designee, of the availability of funds.

(c) Before the release of financial assistance, NRCS will enter into a Cooperative Agreement with a sponsor that specifies the responsibilities of the sponsor under this part, including any required operation and maintenance responsibilities. NRCS will not provide funding for activities undertaken by a sponsor prior to the signing of the agreement between NRCS and the sponsor.

(1) NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats.

(2) Efforts must be made to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts associated with the implementation of emergency measures, to the extent practicable, giving special attention to protecting cultural resources and fish and wildlife habitat.

(3) Funding priorities for recovery measures. NRCS will provide EWP assistance based on the following criteria, which are ranked in the order of importance:

- (i) Exigency situations;
- (ii) Sites where there is a serious, but not immediate threat to human life;
- (iii) Sites where buildings, utilities, or other important infrastructure components are threatened;
- (iv) When reviewing paragraphs (c)(3)(i) through (iii) of this section, NRCS will take into account the following resources as they may affect the priority, including, but not limited to:
 - (A) Sites inhabited by federally listed threatened and endangered species or containing federally designated critical habitat where the species or the critical habitat could be jeopardized, destroyed, or adversely modified without the EWP practice;
 - (B) Sites that contain or are in the proximity to cultural sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places where the listed resource would be jeopardized if the EWP practice were not installed;
 - (C) Sites where prime farmland supporting high value crops is threatened;
 - (D) Sites containing wetlands that would be damaged or destroyed without the EWP practice;
 - (E) Sites that have a major effect on water quality; and
 - (F) Sites containing unique habitat, including but not limited to, areas inhabited by State-listed threatened and endangered species, fish and wildlife management areas, or State-identified sensitive habitats; and
- (v) Other funding priorities established by the Chief of NRCS.

§ 624.9 Time limits.

Funds must be obligated by the State Conservationist and construction completed within 220 calendar days after the date funds are committed to the State Conservationist, except for exigency situations in which case the construction must be completed within 10 days after the date the funds are committed.

§ 624.10 Floodplain easements.

(a) *General.* NRCS may purchase floodplain easements as an emergency measure. NRCS will only purchase easements from landowners on a voluntary basis.

(b) *Floodplain easements.* (1) Floodplain easements established under this part will be:

- (i) Held by the United States, through the Secretary of Agriculture;
- (ii) Administered by NRCS or its designee; and
- (iii) Perpetual in duration;

(2) *Eligible land.* NRCS may determine land is eligible under this section if:

- (i) The floodplain lands were damaged by flooding at least once within the previous calendar year or have been subject to flood damage at least twice within the previous 10 years; or
- (ii) Other lands within the floodplain would contribute to the restoration of the flood storage and flow, erosion control, or that would improve the practical management of the easement; or
- (iii) Lands would be inundated or adversely impacted as a result of a dam breach.

(3) *Ineligible land.* NRCS may determine that land is ineligible under this section if:

- (i) Implementation of restoration practices would be futile due to “on-site” or “off-site” conditions;
- (ii) The land is subject to an existing easement or deed restriction that provides sufficient protection or restoration, as determined by the Chief of NRCS, of the floodplain’s functions and values; or
- (iii) The purchase of an easement would not meet the purposes of this part.

(4) *Compensation for easements.* NRCS will determine easement compensation in accordance with applicable regulation and other law.

(5) NRCS will not acquire any easement unless the landowner accepts the amount of the easement payment that is offered by NRCS. NRCS reserves the right not to purchase an easement if the easement compensation for a particular easement would be too expensive, as determined by NRCS.

(6) NRCS may provide up to 100 percent of the restoration and enhancement costs of the easement. NRCS may enter into an agreement with the landowner or another third party to ensure that identified practices are implemented. NRCS, the landowner, or other designee may implement identified